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ABSTRACT

Traditional supervision of teachers in American schools is often mislabeled. In practice, it is more an exercise in administrative monitoring and evaluation instead of a method to help teachers grow and improve professionally. Clinical supervision, developed as an alternative to traditional supervisory methods, focuses on the non-evaluative use of classroom observation data. Peer coaching, an innovative outgrowth of clinical supervision, places the responsibility of supervision in the hands of the teachers themselves. This paper provides information on peer coaching and presents findings from other studies that show the successes of inservice peer coaching. The need for peer coaching with preservice teachers is called for and findings are shown to indicate the successes of preservice peer coaching. Several issues are proposed that should be considered when designing a preservice peer coaching program. Contains 35 references. (Author/ASK)

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Supervising Student Teachers Using Peer Coaching

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Traditional supervision of teachers in American schools is often mislabeled. In practice, it is more an exercise in administrative monitoring and evaluation instead of a method to help teachers grow and improve professionally.

Clinical supervision (Cogan, 1973), developed as an alternative to traditional supervisory methods, focuses on the non-evaluative use of classroom observation data. This field-based approach attempts to increase teachers' understanding of the art and science of teaching and contribute to their development as practitioners. Clinical supervision is a cyclical process that includes at least three stages: preobservation conference, classroom observation, and postobservation conference (see Appendix A).

Peer Coaching

Peer coaching, an innovative outgrowth of clinical supervision, places the responsibility of supervision in the hands of teachers themselves. As a type of developmental collaboration, peer coaching is a process in which two or more teachers meet regularly for problem solving using planning, observation, feedback, and creative thinking for the development of a specific skill (Joyce & Showers, 1980). With its beginnings as a staff development technique, peer coaching has most often been applied at the inservice level, and has been used to enhance preservice teacher education only in recent years. This paper traces the history and successes of peer coaching within inservice teacher education, then gives a rationale and procedure for using peer coaching with preservice teachers.

The purposes of peer coaching vary according to the needs of the teachers (Garmston, 1987):

- *Technical coaching* asks peers to focus on helping each other transfer a new teaching skill. For example, peers may focus on alternative assessment and help each other ensure a match between their instruction and assessment practices.
- *Collegial coaching* focuses on the refinement of teaching practices. Peers work on skills with which they believe they may need help and feedback but that are already present in their teaching repertoire. For instance, if peers want to improve their questioning skills, they might use the preobservation conference to write appropriate questions and then focus the postobservation conference feedback on this skill.
- *Challenge coaching* resolves a problematic situation in instruction and begins with the identification of a persistent problem. For example, if a teacher is experiencing difficulty implementing cooperative learning group work, working

with a peer to analyze the situation would allow her to improve this technique for the benefit of the students.

Whether the purpose for using peer coaching is learning new skills, improving existing skills, or rectifying a problematic situation in one's teaching, the process is the same and follows the stages of the clinical supervision cycle. However, emphasis is placed on the preobservation conference, where peers collaboratively decide which skills or methods will be the focus of the observation and postconference.

The peer coach has two primary functions within the clinical supervision cycle (Neubert, 1988). The first is to provide feedback to the coached (observed) teacher on her attempts to adapt the new or revised classroom skills. Also, because making a change in teaching may cause anxiety, the coach provides support for the coached teacher during this adjustment period.

Peer coaching programs vary according to who serves as the coach (Ackland, 1991). In *expert coaching* an outside trainer provides workshops to groups of teachers in the use of a specific skill or model and then serves as coach to individual teachers. The expert could also be a teacher in the same building with advanced knowledge of a teaching model or skill assisting a peer who does not possess the same knowledge. In *reciprocal coaching* pairs or small groups of teachers with equal knowledge and teaching skill serve as peer coaches to each other, alternating the roles of coach and observed teacher.

Successes of Inservice Peer Coaching

Too often inservice workshops ignore the individual needs of teacher participants and do not provide follow-up assistance to teachers in the classroom. As a result, only 5-10% of what is learned in a one-shot workshop is transferred to the classroom (Joyce & Showers, 1980; Batesky, 1991). However, teachers who have been involved in peer coaching programs have been found to practice the new strategies more frequently, use them more effectively and skillfully, retain knowledge of the skills for a longer time, and exhibit a better understanding of the skills in terms of their lesson objectives (Showers, 1985). The research of Joyce and Showers (1980) has shown that the necessary conditions for this type and rate of transfer include: presentation of theory, demonstrations of the teaching skill or model, simulated practice of the skill/model, use of the skill/model in an actual classroom setting, and coaching for application of the skill/model (Joyce & Showers, 1982, 1983).

In addition to enhancing the effectiveness of teachers, peer coaching provides them with many benefits:

- *Companionship and collegiality:* Typical K-12 school organization isolates teachers in their classrooms. Peer coaching increases time spent by teachers in discussions of planning, instruction, and assessment with their colleagues (Showers, 1985).
- *Learning in context:* Because each classroom is a complex interactive environment, a peer coach is an invaluable resource to a teacher when adapting skills to different groups of students (Smylie & Conyers, 1991).
- *Reflection:* In the act of conferencing with another teacher, an individual reflects not only on her own practice, but also on the feedback she gives to her peer partner. Peer coaching fosters deeper thinking about the content and processes of one's teaching (Garmston, Linder, & Whitaker, 1993).
- *Common language:* In pre- and postconference meetings, teachers use concrete language to describe, analyze, and interpret their work. With this common professional language to describe the acts of teaching, teachers increase their own learning about teaching and their subject matter (Little, 1982).
- *Professional growth:* Serving as a coach expands the traditional role of a classroom teacher into that of a teacher educator, especially when helping novice teachers adapt to the workplace (Gilman, 1987; Bartunek, 1990).
- *Supportive environment:* Peer coaching encourages experimentation with new practices and gives teachers the confidence to try something new (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). Teachers are assured that the collected classroom data will be kept confidential between the peer coaching partners and will not become part of an administrative evaluation (Batesky, 1991).

Need for Peer Coaching with Preservice Teachers

The successful use of peer coaching at the inservice level has caused many educators involved in preservice teacher education to question current supervision methods. Several conditions exist within traditional supervision practices on the university level that impede effective supervision of preservice teachers. University supervisors are often either graduate students with demanding schedules or are professors who are busy teaching and/or designing courses and who also need to produce scholarly work (Pierce & Miller, 1994). Both of these groups have minimal time to devote to field experience students. Also, the roles of each member of the supervisory triad (preservice teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor) are at times poorly defined, and individual responsibilities as well as the expectations of both the university supervisor and cooperating teacher are often unclear (Hoover, O'Shea, & Carroll, 1988).

Training for the role of cooperating teacher is an uncommon practice (Lewis, 1990), and cooperating teachers are thus unprepared for their roles as teacher educators. One result of this lack of preparation is that cooperating teachers do not reflect on teaching themselves and are not, therefore, models of reflective practitioners for their field experience students. This is indeed unfortunate because the cooperating teacher has been repeatedly noted as the most influential element of the student teaching experience (Metcalf, 1991). In addition, a cooperating teacher receives no reprieve of duties when accepting a student teacher into her classroom (Koerner, 1992), which can make serving as a cooperating teacher more burdensome than invigorating.

Teacher educators and cooperating teachers need not despair, however, for another body of research on the concerns of student teachers and stages that they experience in the process of teacher education serves as a helpful guide to inform effective supervision. Student teachers have some common concerns, and these concerns occur in a fairly regular sequence (Fuller & Bown, 1975). First, preservice teachers are concerned with their own survival, including whether or not they will be liked by the pupils and the cooperating teacher, their own adequacy as a student teacher, classroom control, and their own status as "student." After some time in the field placement dealing with these survival concerns, they worry increasingly about the duties and tasks of a teacher: planning instruction, working with students, noninstructional duties, and lack of time and materials. At the third stage, student teachers are able to devote their attention to the needs of their pupils and the appropriateness of their teaching and curriculum for individual students.

Caruso (1977) categorizes student teacher development based on student teachers' feelings and attitudes (see Appendix B). Six stages compose this model, and it is only at stage five, labeled as "more confidence/greater inadequacy," that survival is no longer a concern for student teachers. Student teachers at this stage finally realize that they have the abilities to complete the internship and only then can they make progress toward analysis of their teaching. Unfortunately, many student teachers do not reach these later stages of development because their concerns are not taken seriously and sufficiently addressed.

Clearly, it behooves teacher educators to apply techniques to provide the developmental support that preservice teachers need to enter student teaching at a higher stage of development, thus making the teacher education process more efficient. Peer coaching is a technique that enables university supervisors and cooperating teachers to become more effective teacher educators. When armed with

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the knowledge of both the process of peer coaching and the stages of student teachers, those responsible for teacher education in both the university setting and in K-12 schools possess a powerful combination.

Successes of Preservice Peer Coaching

The successes of peer coaching on the inservice level have motivated teacher educators to use this technique as an enhancement to traditional university supervision of student teaching and early field experience practica. Although the amount of research on peer coaching in preservice teacher education is not as extensive as that involved in inservice, peer coaching has been found to improve teacher education in the following ways:

- *Observation skills*: In order for student teachers to reap the benefits of observing other practitioners, they must know what to observe. Sending preservice teachers into the field without giving them guidance or focus about what to look for and why does them a great disservice. Peer coaching and its emphasis on the preobservation conference gives student teachers ongoing practice in the use of these skills (Majhanovich & Gray, 1992).
- *Transfer of skills*: Continued use of peer coaching facilitates student teachers' recall and use of effective strategies and techniques that were presented to them in methodology courses (Neubert & Stover, 1994; Peterson & Hudson, 1989; Wynn, 1988).
- *Reflection:* The discussion that transpires between student teachers during their peer coaching conferences (pre- and post-) are opportunities to discuss and reflect upon teaching strategies and methods (Barnett & Bayne, 1992).
- *Larger repertoire of skills*: Opportunities to observe peers' teaching exposes student teachers to additional teaching strategies and methods, and gives them opportunities to share ideas and materials, thus extending teacher education by using peers as resources (Neubert & Stover, 1994).
- *Counteracts ineffective supervision*: The majority of cooperating teachers are not trained to fulfill their role as supervisors to student teachers (Lewis, 1990). Engaging in peer coaching gives student teachers an extra source of input and feedback in their episodes of teaching.
- *Better match between goals of university and field setting*: When a student teacher or group of student teachers is placed in a K-12 setting, the cooperating teacher becomes familiar with the goals of the particular teacher education program (Barnett & Bayne, 1992). Not only are student teachers supporting each

other, but the cooperating teacher is able to participate in the teacher education process along with them as she helps them to reach program goals.

- *Communities of learners:* Just as teachers are encouraged to create conditions in their own classrooms for pupils to work in groups, teachers should be placed in communities of learners to enhance their own problem-solving abilities by studying teaching and learning together (Arends & Winitzky, 1996).
- *Developmental levels:* Because of the focus on individual needs in the preobservation conference and the cyclical nature of peer coaching, Neubert and Stover (1994) found that even the weakest student teachers in their program, who began with superficial comments, were able to move to a more advanced stage of concern and a deeper level of reflection.

Designing a Preservice Peer Coaching Program

When using peer coaching in a specific preservice teacher education program, several issues should be considered (Hudson, Miller, Salzberg, & Morgan, 1994).

First, coaches need to be chosen. Keeping in mind that a trusting, collegial relationship is vital to the peer coaching process, experienced teachers may be paired with novice teachers or two novice teachers may be paired together. However, the use of either novice or experienced teachers as coaches will affect the decisions in other areas of the program because of the differences in levels of experience.

Next, responsibilities of the coach must be assigned. For example, the coach may be responsible for the full range of supervision duties, including assigning a grade, while the university supervisor monitors the progress of the coached teacher, or the coach may have limited responsibilities while the university supervisor continues to conduct formal observations and evaluations.

Third, the amount of training provided to coaches must be considered. Will the coach have minimal or extensive training on data collection, coaching procedures, and communication and collaboration skills?

A fourth issue to be resolved in developing a preservice peer coaching program is to decide which teaching behaviors the coach will focus on and how data will be collected (Hudson et al., 1994). If the preservice teacher is using a highly structured lesson format, the coach will have a better idea about when certain teacher and/or student behaviors will occur in the lesson, which will simplify the job of observing. Decisions about the number of different behaviors to observe and the type of observation system to use will also affect the complexity of the

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observation. Hudson et al. suggest novice coaches use a well-defined observation system, in which observation forms contain clearly defined teacher and student behaviors and for which training is provided in collecting data and giving feedback.

Finally, the type of coaching procedure must be determined. All peer coaching should follow the clinical supervision cycle of preobservation conference, observation, and postobservation conference, but circumstances may require the use of videotaping instead of live observations. Also, the practice of allowing time before conferring with the coach permits the preservice teacher to evaluate his own performance and begin to gain skills of self-evaluation.

Implementation of peer coaching in an existing preservice teacher education program calls for teacher educators to make careful and deliberate decisions regarding the forms and purpose of peer coaching, the time and location of observations, and the skills of focus. Once these decisions are made, the teacher educator must remain closely involved with the evolving peer coaching program to ensure that the process is helpful for the prospective teachers.

Procedure for Preservice Peer Coaching

After making the programmatic decisions outlined above, the teacher educator can facilitate the success of the peer coaching program and remain actively involved in the progress of peer coaching by helping the peer coaches with materials, checking for their involvement in the clinical supervision cycle, and ensuring that each individual understands the purposes of each aspect of the program. The teacher educator not only supervises the content of teaching, but supervises the process of teacher collaboration by assisting the prospective teachers in their discussions and analyses of their teaching in the following ways (Benedetti, 1997):

1. Suggest that student teachers choose a coach whom they trust.
2. Be certain that everyone is familiar with and able to engage in the clinical supervision processes, which include a preobservation conference that sets the focus for the observation, the classroom observation itself, and the postobservation conference debriefing period with planning for future implementation and observations.
3. Advise everyone to collect materials to aid observation and feedback processes, such as notebooks/log books and video- and audiotapes. Videotaping the lesson may help coaches who become overwhelmed by the amount of activity during observations or who may not be able to view the lesson firsthand.
4. Consider conducting weekly peer coaching seminars as Mello (1984) outlines:
    - Peers propose discussion topics.

- Group members ask clarification questions.
- Members share their experiences or brainstorm new ideas.
- The nominator of the topic chooses what she thinks will work best in her situation.
- During the next meeting, the group member informs the group about how she applied the advice the group generated.

The process of becoming a teacher is complicated. Apart from the academic and practical aspects of teacher education, there is a very personal component to becoming a teacher. If teacher educators are going to attend to this personal component, they must appreciate and understand that one's learning proceeds best when it is situated in a context, constructed from personal knowledge, and takes place in a social setting (Borko & Putnam, 1996). With its many successes with inservice teachers, and similar results in preservice teacher education, peer coaching has been shown to provide opportunities for this kind of learning and is a powerful technique for effecting change and reform in today's classrooms.

Teacher educators cannot prepare preservice teachers for every situation they will face in the classroom. Teacher education can, however, provide its students with effective strategies to use as cognitive tools to work through any situation presented to them in their teaching. Peer coaching is one strategy that is collaborative and contextual, an aid to teachers for use in every teaching event.

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Appendix A: Cycle of Clinical Supervision

Robert Goldhammer, 1969, *Clinical Supervision*	Morris L. Cogan, 1973, *Clinical Supervision*
• Stage 1: Preobservation conference	• Phase 1: Establishing the teacher-supervisor relationship • Phase 2: Planning with the teacher • Phase 3: Planning the strategy of observation
• Stage 2: Observation	• Phase 4: Observing instruction
• Stage 3: Analysis and strategy	• Phase 5: Analyzing the teaching-learning processes • Phase 6: Planning the strategy of the conference
• Stage 4: Supervision conference	• Phase 7: The conference
• Stage 5: Postconference analysis	• Phase 8: Renewal planning

Appendix B: Stages of Student Teachers

	Caruso (1977)	Campbell & Wheatley (1983)	Piland & Anglin (1993)
Concern with self **Anxiety** **Confusion** **Uncertainty**	I. Anxiety -- euphoria anxiety about approaching student teaching sets high expectations excitement about finally being in the classroom II. Confusion -- clarity negotiation of their role with students, cooperating teacher, and supervisor while making their way in the classroom by taking on small responsibilities	Stage 1: Concern with self Can I handle this? What do they think of me? self analysis; focus on self vs. teaching or learning seem to perform mechanically authors claim it may be futile to bring up issues of student learning while ST are struggling with identity issues beginning student teachers "seemed to learn the classroom routine, but some could not characterize the dynamics within their classes" (p. 61).	Stage 1: Fear/Uncertainty prior to placement, ST felt fear, nervousness, and anxiety growth was noted when concerns decreased and questions were answered moved to next stage when welcomed into placement and introduced to people and places Stage 2: Socialization ST accepted by children and others into the role of teacher trust developing between CT and ST moved to next stage when ST successfully taught lessons and received positive feedback
Concern with teaching actions **Beginning competence** **Autonomy**	III. Competence -- inadequacy feedback from CT and US helps to establish basic foundation for building confidence although students continue to be insecure and unsure about own teaching difficult for them to get used to being authority figures while children continue to "test" them IV. Criticism -- new awareness give greater attention to children and professional issues better able to take criticism become more critical of self and others	Stage 2: Concern with teaching actions and student behavior What will I do? What will I say? focus on own actions but are more aware of classroom challenges sometimes leads to excessive planning (resulting in somewhat rigid, detailed presentations) or to waiting for someone to tell them what to do (ready to try to imitate anything without concern about appropriateness) view disruptions or apathy as problems rather than as symptoms of problems	Stage 3: Autonomy readiness to take control over pupils and classroom management begin to develop autonomy in planning of lessons and content

	Caruso (1977)	Campbell & Wheatley (1983)	Piland & Anglin (1993)
Concern with student learning **Confidence** **Affirmation**	V. More confidence -- greater inadequacy survival no longer an issue so can better critically analyze selves but are unable to meet their standard of perfection compete with CT in lesson prep and relationship with students VI. Loss -- relief loss from leaving classroom, students, and CT; relief that it is over reassessment of and reflection on the experience	Stage 3: Concern with student learning Did they learn? begin to address needs of individual students view student teaching as time to practice teaching as well as study teaching and develop their own teaching styles not many STs get to this point	Stage 4: Affirmation evaluation by US and CT affirm ST's abilities to teach meet personal goals and expectations graduation loss at leaving classroom, but relief that the experience was over

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